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DE RUEHKI #0352 0812224
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 222224Z MAR 07
FM AMEMBASSY KINSHASA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5850
INFO RUEHXR/RWANDA COLLECTIVE
RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AF DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RHMFISI HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE
RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK

UNCLAS KINSHASA 000352

SIPDIS

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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PGOV ASEC KPKO MOPS CASC CG

SUBJECT: KINSHASA SITREP 2: FIGHTING CONTINUES, LOOTING
REPORTED

REF: KINSHASA 351

¶1. (U) Scattered gunfire continued as of 10:00 p.m. in the central Gombe district of Kinshasa between elements of the Congolese military (FARDC) and guard forces of former Vice President Jean-Pierre Bemba. Shooting has diminished throughout the evening although RPG fire and machine gun fire were heard at the Embassy and elsewhere in Gombe. Some of Bemba's guards were seen moving along Gombe's main Boulevard de 30 Juin firing their weapons. MONUC peacekeepers remain deployed in the area but have not engaged according to MONUC military officials.

¶2. (U) The GDRC released an official declaration late in the evening March 22 condemning Bemba's actions. The statement blamed Bemba for the violence and claimed he had attempted to take power by force. The GDRC appealed to citizens to go about their normal business and ignore calls by Bemba intended to foment disorder. The communique concluded by stating the GDRC will restore peace at whatever price.

¶3. (U) There are no reports of any AmCits casualties in the fighting. Some remain stuck in various office buildings throughout Gombe. As reported reftel, approximately 120 Embassy personnel, including local staff, will remain overnight at the Chancery, JAO complex and USAID offices. All have been advised to remain in their present positions until further notice.

¶4. (U) Post has received numerous but unconfirmed reports of looting at various stores in Gombe after sunset but the activity, if true, is apparently isolated. The Dutch Embassy reported an explosion outside the Memling Hotel in central Gombe around 7:30 p.m. The greater Kinshasa area outside Gombe remains quiet with no reports of fighting, as do other areas of the country. There are not yet any estimates of killed or wounded.

¶5. (U) As reported reftel, Bemba was interviewed on MONUC's Radio Okapi and appealed for a ceasefire. He called on forces of both sides to return to their respective camps so that a political solution can be achieved. Bemba said he is ready to meet President Joseph Kabila to discuss the situation. Kabila has not yet publicly responded to Bemba's appeal.

MEECE